CULTURAL DRIVERS OF EFFECTIVE CENSUS TAKING IN A THIRD WORLD SOCIETY. A SURVEY IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Unlike in advance countries, census activities in the third world societies are challenged by a number of factors. The challenge always generate conflict in many dimensions and often make their results contested by power blocks. In Nigeria, such factors vary by ethnic sentiments. In the north, the activity is limited by religious sentiment, in the east, it is determined by political sentiment and the desire for autonomy. The west and south also have their peculiar sentiments. Akwa Ibom State in the south-south geo political region of Nigeria is sandwiched by incomplete enumeration and figure allocation as evidence from past censuses including that of 2006 in which the figure published then was lessen by 260, 000 in 2009. This paper is concerned with identifying the cultural drivers that impede census taking activities in the state. It was guided by empirical argument of social Dominance Theory, Symbolic Interactionist Theory and Conflict Theory respectively. The paper found that census activities was impede because the people felt they were marginalized and so, they decided to adhere to their cultural practices which they feel was a better alternative.

Introduction

Census provides the most important population statistics needed for development planning since it shows the composition of a population in terms of age, sex, education, occupation, marital status, religion and place of residence. Moreover, given census data, the current population growth rate can be related to the economic growth rate and the relative rates of growth of the populations of the various components of a country can be known.

A population census is an enumeration of the people within a delimited territory at a specific time so as to determine their actual number, their distribution over the land area and their basic socio-demographic and economic make ups. On the real sense, this implies that everyone within a country is counted. This has given birth to countless questions, which one important question is, is it possible to have a completely accurate count of population in any part of the world? Questions like this should not be left rhetorical, but it should be answered for proper follow up and necessary applications for corrections of errors.

Although information like this can be inferred from sample survey findings and from other statistics only a national census can adequately provide such data for the smallest sub-division of a country and hence for planning at local level.

Nigeria has a history of problems with data collection. Results of the first post-independence census conducted in 1962 were withdrawn. The reliability of the 1963 census has been questioned. The results of the 1973 census were discredited and never saw the light of day, and no census was conducted in 1981.6 Collecting data in Nigeria can be a challenge. During the March 2006 census, thousands of enumerators walked off the job, because they hadn't been paid.7Several years ago, Holly Newby, who was the U.S. survey manager for ORC Macro (now Macro International) in Nigeria for the 2003 Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), conducted a survey there. She discovered that rough terrain made her job all the more difficult. Similarly, last year, census enumerators found that some households were not easily accessible by roads. Some were more easily reached by water. But the boats weren't well-built and most Nigerians don't swim, so enumerators were reluctant to go by boat.

Houses surrounded by waters within Akwa Ibom State were not counted due to fear by the numerators of going through water. Sometimes reaching households isn't the problem. Inaccurate reporting is. The 1991 census was marred by allegations of cheating. On the first page of the census form, there was enough room to list up to nine household members. Oddly enough, data collected from some states in the South showed all households reporting exactly nine people. Some population experts have speculated that state and lower-level officials muddied the data by telling communities to misreport at the household level.

Objectives of the Study

This study was set to achieving the following objectives

1. To Identify the cultural drivers of effective census taking in the study area.
2. Examine the effect of manipulated census figures in policy making, planning and development
3. Suggest ways of curbing census irregularities to enhance proper participation, effective planning and development.

The Study Area

Akwa Ibom is a state in Nigeria with the state capital in Uyo.The state is located in the South-South geopolitical zone, and is bordered on the east by Cross River State, on the west by Rivers State and Abia State, and on the south by the Atlantic Ocean and the southernmost tip of Cross River State

Akwa Ibom State lies between latitude 40 32â€™ and 5 0 53â€™ North; and Longitudes 70 25â€™ and 80 25â€™ East. In terms of structural make up, Akwa Ibom is triangular in shape and covers a total land area of 8,412 km2, encompassing the Qua Iboe River Basin, the western part of the lower Cross River Basin and the Eastern part of the Imo River Basin. With an ocean front which spans a distance of 129 kilometers from Ikot Abasi in the west to Oron in the east, Akwa Ibom presents a picture of captivating coastal, mangrove forest and beautiful sandy beach resorts.

The landscape of Akwa Ibom is mostly flat. This is because the underlying geology of the state is predominantly coastal plain sediments. The coastal nature of the state makes it the natural deposit of mosaic of marine, deltaic, estuarine, lagoonal and fluvio- lacustrine material.

As with every Nigerian coastal area, the state experiences two main seasons, the wet and the dry seasons. The wet or rainy season lasts between eight to nine months starting from mid- march till the end of November. The dry season has a short duration of between the last week of November or early December and lasts till early march.

Despite the seasonal variations, by the nature and location of the state along the coast which exposes it to hot maritime air mass, rainfall is expected every month of the year.

There are 31 Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State which includes; Abak, Eastern Obolo, Eket, Esit Eket, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo, Etinan, Ibeno, Ibesikpo Asutan, Ibiono Ibom, Ika, Ikono, Ikot Abasi, Ikot Ekpene, Ini, Itu, Mbo, Mkpat Enin, Nsit Atai, Nsit Ibom, Nsit Ubium, Obot Akara, Okobo, Onna, Oron, Oruk Anam, Udung Uko, Ukanafun, Uruan, Urue-Offong/Oruko, Uyo.

The conglomerate of these Local Government Areas makes the total Population of about 5,867,932 people. The gender distribution thus account for (Male - 2,992,645 and Female - 2,875,287)

There are 3 Senatorial districts in Akwa Ibom State, these are; Eket Senatorial district, Ikot Ekpene senatorial district and Uyo Senatorial district respectively.

Akwa Ibom South senatorial district otherwise known as Eket Senatorial district in Akwa Ibom State covers12 local government areas

These areas include Ikot Abasi, Mkpat Enin, Eastern Obolo, Onna, Eket, Esit Eket, Ibeno, Okobo, Oron, UdungUko, Urueoffong/Oruko and Mbo.

Akwa Ibom North-West senatorial district otherwise known as Ikot Ekpene senatorial district in Akwa Ibom State covers 10 local government areas which comprise Abak, Essien, Etim Ekpo, Ika, Ikono, Ikot Ekpene, Ini, Obot, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun.

Akwa Ibom North-East senatorial district in Akwa Ibom State covers 9 local governments areas which consist Ibiono Ibom, Itu, Uyo, Uruan, Ibesikpo Asutan, Nsit Ibom, Nsit Atai, Etinan, Nsit Ubium. Akwa Ibom North-East is also known as Uyo Senatorial district

It is from these three senatorial districts that purposively the sample of this study is drawn. 100 per senatorial district, making a total of 300 sample for this study.

In Eket Senatorial district two Local Government Areas were purposively selected which includes Eastern Obolo LGA and Onna Local Government Area. Okoroete is a coastal local government area in Akwa-Ibom State under great tidal influence from the Bight of Bonny. Eastern Obolo LGA was mapped

Literature Review

From the First Republic, the issues of census figures was raised by the Eastern Region following their filed suit against the federal government of Nigeria on 18th May, 1964 to show to the world by a way to prove that the 1963 census was legal and constitutional as against their view and prove of contesting the result of the census and seeing same as illegal and unconstitutional which the process and result they declared null and void. (West African Pilot, 19 May 1964, 1).

The supreme federal court however, dismissed the Eastern motion. The outcome of the census was accepted, figures published and projections based on them used as the basis of social and economic planning. *The All Nigeria Law Reports (1964), 218–226,*

This was the first time that a regional government sued the federal government in the Supreme Federal Court, thus marking a potentially destabilizing precedent for the country’s politics. The 1964 federal elections, conducted in an atmosphere of violence and intimidation, created a parliamentary allocation that mirrored the close link between

political parties, regions, and their ethnic constituencies, thus highlighting the political significance of the census. *(*Population of Tropical Africa, 97–105*.)*

Following the trends of census in Nigeria, the census that would be accepted took place only in 1992. The fragile foundations of the first Republic census figures had a longer lifespan due to the repression of the census held by Yakubu Gowon's Military government in 1973.

Nigerian scholars and policy makers have repeatedly pleaded for the necessity of depoliticizing the census, thus reinforcing a dichotomous distinction between the political and technical aspects of population counting. This paper seeks to understand reasons for the controversies following the release of the figures from Nigeria census of 2006 for Akwa Ibom State, the adverse effects of the figures controversy in Akwa Ibom State 2006 Population census, the political effects of falsification of figures in Akwa Ibom State and possible ways to correct these problems.

History has it that census taking in Africa and Nigeria has shifted from data quality to the political economy of numbers. There are several possible ways of historicizing census taking in Africa. Genèses, 39 (2000), 121–137*).*

One way is to interpret the census as a source for demographic history and thus treat its evolution as the starting point of a reflection on data quality. Between the late nineteenth century and independence around 1960, colonial regimes across the continent produced several attempts to count their subjects for purposes of taxation, military conscription, and the acquisition of knowledge for use in policy making. T*he Journal of African History,* 18:4 (1977), 507–530 However, the quality of the data in colonial censuses was often dubious.

Contemporary sources describe the persistent administrative and political challenges associated with counting people, including a lack of staff and funding, low state capacity, and the reluctance and resistance of the enumerated people-often depicted as resulting from a mixture of African ‘cultural taboos’, ‘ignorance and superstition’, and fear of taxation. (*The population cencensus of Northern Nigeria 1952: problems and results)*

As a consequence, demographers have intensely debated the possible uses (as well as limitations) of colonial censuses for reconstructing Africa’s demographic past. With reference to the Belgian Congo, Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland, Bruce Fetter noted that, in spite of being poor guides for an estimation of the magnitude of a country’s population, colonial censuses are useful tools for making inferences about its structure. They contribute to the debate on the impact of colonial rule on living standards. (F*etter, ‘Decoding and interpreting)* More recently, Ewout Frankema and Morten Jerven turned to the history of census taking in colonial and postcolonial Africa to reassess the continent’s demographic evolution. Besides suggesting an upward revision of total population figures,

they also reiterated that colonial censuses should not be dismissed altogether as sources for the magnitude of Africa's population. (*Athens, OH, 2010),* 245–275

They further stressed the importance of analysing state capacity and the incentives faced by census takers and enumerated subjects (alongside more consolidated interpretations of demographic evidence and intercensal growth rates) as determinants of the validity and reliability of population figures. (*Frankema and Jerven, 'Writing history backwards',* *911)*

The political economy of numbers has occupied a prominent role in the extensive literature on Nigeria, where counting people has largely taken place within a set of incentives that associated expected benefits with the inflation of population figures. *African Economic History, 46:1 (2018),* 104–36.

The National Population Commission, which in its report on the 2006 census admitted that 'varying degrees of overenumeration of population was rampant throughout the country coupled with omission of certain settlements in the earlier census exercises, and this possibly contributed much to the unacceptability of the census.' *Population and Development Review, 33:1(2007), 207.* However, other commentators, most notably the demographer Paul Olusanya, emphasized in the 1980s that the 'problems of population enumeration in Nigeria are largely problems of under-development, of ignorance, of mass illiteracy. Even if there was no political rivalry, our data gathering efforts would still be vitiated by more important factors*. African Affairs, 87:349 (1988), 553–62.*

The 2006 census has shown that the removal of questions on ethnicity and religion and the introduction of new technologies, such as the Global Positioning System (GPS) and optical mark and character recognition software for the reading and processing of questionnaires, was not enough to avoid controversy. *African Population Studies, 27:2 (2014), 249–62.* Furthermore, that count was allegedly still affected by logistical and organizational challenges. (*In the news: the Nigerian census', Population Reference Bureau, 1 Apr. 2006)* Focusing, as most scholarly literature on the Nigerian census does, on the relationship between the federal government and the states misses other crucial aspects of the political economy of population figures. Indeed, the benefits resulting from the inflation of figures were conducive to the creation of new patterns of inequality that can only be observed by 'zooming in' and looking at the life of specific towns and local communities, as shown by the experience of different towns in southwestern Nigeria during the 1962 and 1991 censuses. (Eighmy, 1968). But communities' attempts to shape the outcomes of the censuses not only targeted population figures but also involved a wider array of social practices, including deliberate modification — and sometimes defacing of public spaces.

April (2007) Provisional results of the 2006 census in Nigeria show that Kano in the north is Nigeria's most populous state (9.4 million), followed by Lagos (9.0 million) in the south. Northern states account for 75 million people, while the southern states are home to 65 million. The total population was 140 million.

Since December, when these provisional results were released, some Nigerians have rejected the numbers, while others have stood by them. A spokesman for a separatist group in the South described the census as "outrageously doctored figures." (Vesperini 2007). The pan-Igbo socio-cultural organization Ohanaeze Ndigbo said the census artificially reduced Ndigbo to a minority.

Bola Tinubu, the governor of Lagos state, called for a recount and said the census figures were false. source: (*Inter Press Service, "Nigeria: Census Stirs Up Emotions in States," Africa News, Feb. 12, 2007). Ni*geria's president Olusegun Obasanjo called those who dispute the results "confusionists," adding that when they saw the census didn't break the country, they sought to sow confusion. And he washed his hands off the issue: "If you like, use it, if you don't like it, leave it." source:(*Daily Trust, Africa News, Jan. 16, 2007).*

Census results–especially the distribution between the Muslim north and the Christian south-have often sparked controversy in Nigeria. The provisional numbers released in January are no exception. Like earlier censuses that provoked an outcry, the reaction followed a set pattern. The south, which made up less than half the population, rejected figures, while the north endorsed them.

Explaining his objection to the census results, Tinubu claimed that a parallel census conducted by Lagos in collaboration with the National Population Commission put the state's population at more than 17.5 million, not 9.0 million, as the 2006 census suggested. A population of 17.5 million would translate into a population density of 13,492 people per square mile, close to the 13,044 per square mile in Hudson County, N.J., which is home to Jersey City.

In response to critics, the chairman of the NPC tried to appeal to reason. "We cannot simply sit down and allocate certain figures to ourselves simply because we want to please ourselves," said Alhaji Sa-mu'ila Danko Makama. Any state that publishes its own census, he pointed out, has committed a breach of the constitution. The NPC is the only body mandated by law to conduct the census in Nigeria. (*This Day, "Nigeria Census Chief Defends Figures," Africa News, Jan. 14, 2007).*

In a report on the 2006 census process, the chairman observes that even before the census was conducted, highly placed individuals and organizations in several states had already determined to the decimal point the population of a particular area or region. "Almost all these wild guesstimates apparently were based on their perceptions mostly out of ignorance or possibly ulterior motives to suit their agenda," he notes. Source: Population *and Development Review 33, no. 1 (2007): 209.*

Theoretical Framework

The Social Dominance Theory, Symbolic Interaction Theory and Conflict Theory provide the framework of this paper

Social Dominance Theory

Social Dominance Theory was first formulated by Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Social dominance theory notes that chronic group-based oppression i s driven by systematic institutional and individual discrimination. That is, many social institutions (e.g., schools, organized religions, marriage practices, financial houses) and many powerful individuals disproportionately allocate desired goods-such as prestige, wealth, power, food, and health care-to members of dominant and privileged groups, while directing undesirable things such as dangerous work, disdain, imprisonment, and premature death-toward members of less powerful groups. They seek their downfall with the view that they should be the only ones on the advantage side. Social Dominance Theory shares the belief that people will tend to align themselves either for or against the existing social hierarchy, and there is some attempt in the theory to explain how those alignments happen. The proponents of this theory has it that, most people will tend to align themselves with viewpoints that favour their own personal way of viewing themselves. So those who see themselves as insiders might generally favour the powerful forces, while those who see themselves as outsiders may tend to favour movement that might overthrow those forces.

The explanations of this theory are not far from the ethnic battle for dominance among the numerous ethnic groups in Nigeria especially among the three dominant ones even as it relates to census figures. The ethnic group with the highest population census figures uses it as a systemic institutional platform to discriminate and exercise dominance over the ethnic groups that have lower census figures. It is not to be over emphasized that whichever ethnic group that control the highest population controls the greater share of the national resources, irrespective of the ethnic group that actually needs the resources at that time to foster development. Since, population figure are the yardstick with which national resources and political representation are shared, each ethnic group battle to inflate census figure in order to keep dominating the other ethnic groups with the advantages of social, economic and political advantage This is what social dominance theory calls chronic group-based oppression which i s driven by systematic in situation a land individual discrimination. Also, this behaviour of dominance is always legitimatized by the ethnic group that the census figures favours while the one that it does not favour keep fighting for ways to turn the advantage to its own side. In social dominance theory, it is kn

own as legitimizing myths. The hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing myth contributes to greater levels of group-based equality. This is what usually characterized the outcome of past census in Nigeria against Akwa Ibom State.

Different states and regions tends to reject or accept census figures on the bases that it favours them or not. For instance, the 26th November, 1991 census figures shows that Akwa Ibom State population was 2,409,613, the undercount was 1.8 million people, the 2006 census shows that Akwa Ibom State population was 3,902,051 people with undercount of 2.6 million people. With the population projection of 21st March, 2022, the population was 5.5 million. source: *National Population Commission of Nigeria (web).* The population projection assumes the same rate of growth for all LGAs within the state. The undercount of the 1991 census is estimated to be about 25 million, nationwide. Source*: National Bureau of Statistics (web)*

The battle of acceptance and rejection between Lagos of Nigeria and Kano State in the last census of 2006 is a clear indication of this fact. Akwa Ibom State have issues of series of undercounts from 1991 census to 2006 census held in Nigeria. Since census figures is seen as a legal tender of the nation, it has always been used as an instrument of dominance instead of an instrument of planning, policy making and development.

Symbolic Interactionism Theory

Symbolic interactionism is one of several interpretive approaches to social science research. This approach stems largely from the teachings of Mead (1934) but it was Blumer (1969) who coined it's name and who proved influential in developing it into a theoretical perspective that is concerned with the origin and evolution of meaning and identity.

Three basic assumptions underpin Blumer‘s formulation of symbolic interactionism

1. That human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them.
2. That the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one another.
3. That these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.

Other researchers including Maines (1977) and Stryker (1981) have extended these ideas, and because symbolic interactionism has thus evolved over the years, it is now an influential school of thought in social science research (Prasad 1993).It is important to note that symbolic interactionism is not concerned only with the study of symbols. The term-symbolic‖ refers to a basic premise that humans live in a world of objects (e.g., physical as well as social objects) that do not have intrinsic meanings. Instead, the meanings of objects arise out of the interpretations that people assign to them during the

course of everyday social interactions with others. Out of these interactions, shared as well as local (to the actor) meanings emerge but are always subject to the possibility of change. This continuing process of interpretation takes place primarily using the shared symbols of language. People make sense of their world using symbols which convey the meanings of different objects, and these meanings (including the concept of self) in turn influence people's actions toward the objects (Swan and Bowers1998).

Population census is generally seen by countries as an information base that aid planning and development but from the Nigeria experience it is seen as a symbol of political weapon to be used to take undue advantage of the other ethnic groups. This is what one of the assumptions of the theory of symbolic interactionism means when it says that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them. The only meaning that an average Nigeria gives to any form of headcount is that it is a room to battle for higher figures so that his ethnic origin will get the highest allocation from the national resources. Also, this perception of census figures as an instrument of domination among the different states in Nigeria has stood the test of time because the primordial ethnic sentiment is still dominant the domain of our practice of federalism. This means that the trend may continue for a long time because the younger generation has been socialized into this consciousness of ethnic sentiment and superiority. This reflects the theory proposed that the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one another.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, first developed by Karl Marx, is a theory that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity.

In the most recent times, there has been a trend towards cultural construction of institutional structures more than on relational structure. One of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century, Michel Foucault brought about a paradigm shift in the understandings of power. Unlike all conventional understandings of power, Foucault was of the view that power is not concentrated in specific agents or strata but is diffused in all aspects of society. Power need not be always destructive but can be as aspect of collective effort towards improvement and production. According to Foucault, conflict, negotiation and contradictions are part of every relationship (Foucault 1975). Foucault had throughout his works shown how the most effective modes of control are those that are least obvious. Randall Collins (1975) added a micro-level to the macro-level of conflict theory. Like Foucault, he too located conflict in the process of day to day life. All relationships are

based on some antagonism, domination and conflict on the one hand and there are also patterns of solidarity on the other.

How does this theory relate to the subject matter? Karl Marx sets in the understanding that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Some states in Nigeria have taken it upon themselves to remain in power as dominant group, using population census as a tool to always remain in power at the expense of the other ethnic groups. Taking all the stance during the population count just to make sure the population figure in their area is high. This, they do at the expense of the other ethnic groups, especially the minority groups like Akwa Ibom State. Even some of the majority groups are marginalized thus, giving way for a negative reaction. Among the South - Easterners, there is an unrest seeking secession as a result of marginalization in the national political positions which the tool and way to it is the population count. The recent unrest in the south-east is the activity of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and in the South - South which is considered the home base for the nation's most foreign exchange commodity, the crude oil. This area is so blessed crude oil as natural resources which is one of the nation's dependent resources for fund. This area is neglected and marginalized. This has deprived the people of the south -south region especially, Akwa Ibom State less participation at the national political positions and seats. Because of this, a set of agitators, called the Niger Delta militant took it upon themselves to vandalized the national properties just to create room for a dialogue between the federal government of Nigeria and the marginalized and neglected areas. This conflict is what Foucault explained to mean that conflict, negotiation and contradictions are parts of every relationship. (Foucault 1975) Also, it is in line with Randall Collins (1975) that most effective modes of control are those that are least obvious.

Table 1. The population of Akwa Ibom State as a result of the 2006 population census

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	**POPULATION**
Abak	139,090
Eastern Obolo	60,543
Eket	172,557
Esit Eket	63,701
Essien Udim	192,668
Etim Ekpo	105,418
Etinan	169,284
Ibeno	75,380
Ibesikpo Asutan	137,101
Ibiono Ibom	189,640
Ika	72,939
Ikono	131,984
Ikot Abasi	132,023
Ikot Ekpene	143,077
Ini	99,196

Itu	127,033
Mbo	104,012
Mkpat Enin	178,036
Nsit Atai	74,595
Nsit Ibom	108,611
Nsit Ubium	128,231
Obot Akara	148,281
Okobo	104,057
Onna	123,373
Oron	87,461
Oruk Anam	172,654
Udung Uko	53,278
Ukanafun	127,033
Urue Offong	71,159
Uruan	118,300
Uyo	309,573
TOTAL POPULATION	3,920,208

Source: National Population Commission of Nigeria

Table 2.Gender distribution of Akwa Ibom State population After 2006 census

Gender	Population	Percentage
Male	1,993,202	50.82
Female	1,918849	49.17
Total	3,902,051	100

Source: National Population Commission of Nigeria

The data on table 2. above shows the gender distribution of Akwa Ibom State after 2006 population count. The male population was 1,983,202 (50.82%), female population was 1,918,849 (49.17 %).

Table 3. Age Group Distribution of Akwa Ibom State population After 2006 census

Ages	Population	Percentage
0-14 years	1,456,920	37.33
15-64 years	2,318,155	59.40
65+ years	126,976	3.25
Total	3,902,051	100

Source: National Population Commission of Nigeria

The data on table 3. Age group distribution of the population of Akwa Ibom State after 2006 population census explained that from 0-14 years was 1,456,920 (37.33%), ages 15-64 was 2,318,155 (59.40%), 65 years and above was 126,976 (3.25%). From the data above, it is evident that the age group with the highest population was those from the ages of 15-64 years 2,318,155 (59.40%).

Table 4. Age distribution of Akwa Ibom State population after 2006 census

Age	Population	Percentage
0-9 years	986,820	25.28
10-19 years	928,914	23.80
20-29 years	725,791	18.60
30-39 years	483,444	12.38
40-49 years	356,055	9.12
50-59 years	208,159	5.33

60-69 years	127,809	3.27
70-79 years	54,358	1.39
80+ years	30,701	0.78
Total	3,902,051	100

Source: National Population Commission of Nigeria
National Bureau of Statistics

The data on table 4. shows the the distribution of people of Akwa Ibom State after 2006 census. Age 0-9 was 986,820 (25.28%), 10-19 years was 928,914 (23.80%), 20-29 years was 725,791 (18.60%), 30-39 years was 483,444 (12.38%), ages 40-49 was 356,055 (9.12%), 50-59 was 208,159 (5.33%), 60-69 was 127,809 (3.27%), 70-79 was 54,358 (1.39%), those from the ages of 80 years and above was 30,702 (0.78%).

Data and Method

This study used descriptive data collected from 300 respondents from the three senatorial districts of Eket, Ikot Ekpene and Uyo Senatorial districts respectively. Two Local Government Areas were purposively selected from each senatorial district and two villages was selected from each Local Government Area making a total of 3 Senatorial districts, 6 Local Government Areas and 12 villages with 50 respondents from each village, making a total of 300 respondents.

Data presentation

This section provides information on the background characteristics of the study population. Data presented are based on sex and age.

Table 5. Area of the study

Senatorial Districts in Akwa Ibom State	**Local Government Areas**	**Villages**
Eket	Eastern Obolo LGA Onna LGA	Emere Oke Ikot Edor
Ikot Ekpene	Essien Udim LGA Oruk Anam LGA	Mkpatak Ikot Inuen
Uyo	Ibesikpo Asutan LGA Uruan LGA	Edem Ibiok Akpa Mfiriukim

The data on table 5 above shows that respondents were drawn from the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State, two local government areas were selected from each senatorial districts, one village from one local government area.

Table 6. Respondent's Sex distribution

Sex	Population	Percentage
Male	200	66.66
Female	100	33.33
Total	300	100

The data on table 6 above shows that the male respondents were 200 (66.66%) while the female respondents were 100 (33.33%). The male respondents were more than the female respondents

Table 7. Respondents Age distribution.

Age	No of respondents	Percentage
30-40 years	52	17.33
41-50 years	74	24.66
51-60 years	76	25.33
61-70 years	53	17.66
80+ years	45	15
Total	300	100

The data on table 7 above shows that 52 respondents (17.33%) were from the ages of 30-40, ages 41-50 were 74 respondents (24.66%), 76 respondents (25.33%) were 51-60 ages, 61-70 years were 53 respondents (17.66%) and respondents from 80 years and above was 45 (15%).

Table 8. Census activities in the riverine areas of Akwa Ibom State

Year of census	Number of people counted	Percentage
1991	0	0
2006	9	3
Total	300	100

Table 8 shows that in 1991, no one at riverine areas was counted. In 2006, 9 persons (3%). were counted.

Table 9. Census activities in land areas Akwa Ibom State.

Year of census	Number of people counted	Percentage
1991	8	2.66
2006	19	6.33
Total	300	100

Data on table 9 showed that in 1991, 8(2.66%) persons on the land topography of the study area were counted, while in 2006, 19 (6.33%) were counted.

Presentation of interview

Cultural impediment of census taking due to the area, that is,the riverine areas

We have not experienced census exercise at all in this area. People are always afraid of crossing the water to this side to count us. Both the 1991 and 2006 census you are talking about. The only time I experienced census was when I was with my family at port Harcourt.

Inability to gain access to the communities due to bad roads

Due to bad roads, census officials couldn't make it to this side, and as such we were not counted. Some of the neighbouring villages were counted because there was a road access to their community.

Possible solutions to the problems of census taking in this area

We hope that the government will do something about this bad road so that when next the exercise of census is carried out, we in this area will participate

People who do not have fear in crossing water or using boat should be sent to us for the exercise of counting.

Discussion of findings

From the findings, it is seen that

1. There was no census activities in the riverine areas of Akwa Ibom State due to fear of movement by water by the census umpires

2. The inability to gain access to some communities due to bad road is an impediment to census taking

3. enumerators that are friendly with water movement should be sent to the riverine areas for census exercise

4 There is need for Government intervention on the construction of good roads for direct and easy access to all areas during census activities

Conclusions

Having observed the marginalization in the South -South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, especially Akwa Ibom State, in the national politics as a result of number, population count serve as a yardstick with which political power is gained. Population count should not favour a particular ethnic group at the detriment of Akwa Ibom State, rather, it should be fair as serve as a tool for policy making, developmental planning and good governance

Although National population census exercises have had a history of enormous challenges in Nigeria. These challenges affect the credibility and usefulness of census data for sustainable development in Nigeria. Census should be seen as a planning instrument rather than political weapon. With the giant strides being made in all spheres of the nation‘s development, census should be made a priority in Nigeria in her quest for socio-economic transformation and development. Census is of great value and population data is sine qua non to sustainable development

Recommendations

Presently, there is an increased awareness of population issues and the need to integrate population elements into development planning has become urgent in Nigeria. It is time for Nigeria government to recognize the importance of population factors in national development. The following specific recommendations are put forward:

1. The government should de-politicize the use of census figure by embarking on nationwide re-orientation campaign on the importance of census for common national development.
2. Questions about ethnic group, language and religion which trigger tension and inflation of census data should continue to be removed from the census questionnaire in Nigeria.
3. NPC should make use of relevant professionals in conducting the census exercise.
4. NPC should re-train their staff on massive application of new technologies such as Satellite Imagery, remote sensing techniques, machine readable forms, and other ICT devices used in conducting census
5. The government should adhere to 10 years interval in conducting census exercise in Nigeria.
6. The NPC should strengthen the vital registration of birth, death, and migration, and others forms of data capturing that will greatly enhance fair estimation and updating of population and household data in Nigeria.
7. Government should review the laws as they affect headcount in the country to empower the National Population Commission to conduct future credible census exercise.

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